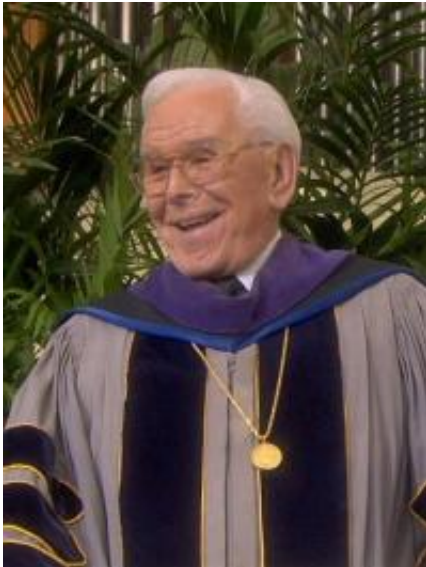


Crystal Cathedral: OMG! Poser tweets as Schuller

March 26 2009, By GILLIAN FLACCUS , Associated Press Writer



In this April 1, 2007 file photo provided by Crystal Cathedral Ministries, the Rev. Robert H. Schuller is shown during Schuller's "Hour of Power" service, at the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, Calif. The social networking site Twitter has taken down a page for megachurch founder and televangelist Robert H. Schuller after the church identified the Twitterer as an imposter. (AP Photo/Crystal Cathedral Ministries)

(AP) -- Televangelist Robert H. Schuller has reached millions worldwide with his weekly "Hour of Power" TV broadcasts, but when it comes to the Internet, he had a high-tech headache: an online impostor.

When Schuller, the founder of the [Crystal Cathedral](#) megachurch,

recently tried to set up an account on the micro-blogging Web site [Twitter](#).com, he discovered another user masquerading as himself.

The site allows users to post messages - or "tweets" - of up to 140 characters from a mobile phone or computer. Those who sign up to read the posts are called "followers."

Schuller's impostor displayed copyrighted images and trademarked sayings from the Crystal Cathedral and "Hour of Power" Web sites on his Twitter account and had attracted nearly 1,000 followers in two weeks, said Greg Fayer, an attorney representing the church.

San Francisco-based Twitter Inc. confirmed that the user was an impostor and suspended the account late Tuesday, co-founder Biz Stone said in an e-mail Wednesday. A new account was set up Wednesday for the real Schuller, said Mike Nason, the church's spokesman.

One of his first tweets? "This is the real Robert H. Schuller. The person saying they were me, here on Twitter is gone. So lets start a new day."

The 82-year-old televangelist made light of the situation.

"I was honored that anybody thought my material was good enough to be repeated," Schuller told The Associated Press. "Maybe I should find out the name of the person and I could hire them as a ghostwriter, look for the positive in the negative."

Schuller, who calls his weekly show "America's Television Church," founded his ministry in a drive-in theater after moving to Southern California in 1955. He studied marketing strategies to attract [worshippers](#) and preached a feel-good Christianity that ballooned into one of the nation's first megachurches and a broadcast watched by millions worldwide.

The church's main sanctuary, the Crystal Cathedral, is a landmark designed by renowned architect Philip Johnson, with a spire visible from afar amid Orange County's suburban sprawl. It has 10,000 members.

Schuller's impersonator - who remains unidentified - seemed to know a lot about that history and the preacher's life, said Nason, the spokesman. The impostor said in his early tweets that he was Schuller's assistant, but then went on to say he was Schuller himself and even talked about the preacher's wife, Nason said.

"The content seemed fairly normal for someone like Dr. Schuller to say," Fayer said. "But in the future you don't know how they're going to use that. What if they start asking people to send money and say, 'Send money to X,Y,Z'?"

Twitter Inc. was founded in 2006 and has grown rapidly to more than 6 million users.

The company has recently gotten plenty of Hollywood buzz as A-list actors sign up and post tweets to control their image, widen their appeal and communicate directly with fans.

An increasing number of pastors have done the same, hoping to learn more about their congregants through the short, conversational exchanges and break down the barrier between the pews and the pulpit.

But some, like Schuller, have run into trouble.

More than 72,000 people, for example, are following a fake Stephen Colbert. And a spokeswoman for Tina Fey has confirmed that the 89,000 people follow a faux Fey on the micro-blogging site.

Twitter has also had to delete fake accounts set up by impostors

purporting to be David Bowie; basketball players Shaquille O'Neal and Nate Robertson; the Dalai Lama; comedian Michael Ian Black; actress Emma Watson; actor Ewan McGregor; and the Austin Police Department.

On the Net:

Rev. Robert H. Schuller on Twitter.com:

<http://www.twitter.com/roberthschuller>

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